

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

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Claim 1. (canceled).

Claim 2. (currently amended) ~~The stiffening system of claim 1~~ A system for stiffening and securing adjacent joists comprising:

a band having a length of at least the distance spanning three joists,

the band configured to rest upon and be secured to a top edge surface of the at least three joists,

at least two truss members secured to an underside of the band by any one of welding, clips and adhesives so as to lie between the joists and with each truss extending between two joists and with the at least two truss members aligned along the band,

the at least two truss members each having vertical side members,

the at least two truss members each having a length equal to a spacing between joists so that when the bands are secured to a top side of the at least three joists, the side members of each truss member abut sides of two joists to hold the at least three joists in a vertical orientation at a specified distance between the at least three joists,

wherein there are a plurality of bands ~~and truss members~~, and

wherein the bands are placed on top of the at least three joists spaced apart from one another along the length of each joist.

Claim 3 (original) ~~The stiffening system of claim 1~~ A system for stiffening and securing adjacent joists comprising:

a band having a length of at least the distance spanning three joists,

the band configured to rest upon and be secured to a top edge surface of the at least three joists,

at least two truss members secured to an underside of the band by any one of welding, clips and adhesives so as to lie between the joists and with each truss extending between two joists and with the at least two truss members aligned along the band,

the at least two truss members each having vertical side members,

the at least two truss members each having a length equal to a spacing between joists so that when the bands are secured to a top side of the at least three joists, the side members of each truss member abut sides of two joists to hold the at least three joists in a vertical orientation at a specified distance between the at least three joists,

wherein the band has fastener openings therein which openings are spaced along the length of band to at least have an opening alignable with the top edge of each joist covered.

Claim 4 (canceled).

Claim 5 (original) ~~The stiffening system of claim 1~~ A system for stiffening and securing adjacent joists comprising:

a band having a length of at least the distance spanning three joists,  
the band configured to rest upon and be secured to a top edge surface of the at least three joists,

at least two truss members secured to an underside of the band by any one of welding, clips and adhesives so as to lie between the joists and with each truss extending between two joists and with the at least two truss members aligned along the band,

the at least two truss members each having vertical side members,

the at least two truss members each having a length equal to a spacing between joists so that when the bands are secured to a top side of the at least three joists, the side members of each truss member abut sides of two joists to hold the at least three joists in a vertical orientation at a specified distance between the at least three joists,

wherein the truss is configured as a rectangular box.

Claim 6 (original) The stiffening system of claim 2 wherein the truss is configured as a rectangular box.

Claim 7 (original) The stiffening system of claim 3 wherein the truss is configured as a rectangular box.

Claim 8 (canceled).

Claim 9 (original) The stiffening system of claim 5 wherein the truss also has an X-shaped brace extending between the corners of the box.

Claim 10 (original) The stiffening system of claim 6 wherein the truss also has an X-shaped brace extending between the corners of the box.

Claim 11 (original) The stiffening system of claim 7 wherein the truss also has an X-shaped brace extending between the corners of the box.

Claim 12 (canceled).

Claim 13 (original) ~~The stiffening system of claim 1~~ A system for stiffening and securing adjacent joists comprising:

a band having a length of at least the distance spanning three joists,

the band configured to rest upon and be secured to a top edge surface of the at least three joists,

at least two truss members secured to an underside of the band by any one of welding, clips and adhesives so as to lie between the joists and with each truss extending between two joists and with the at least two truss members aligned along the band,

the at least two truss members each having vertical side members,

the at least two truss members each having a length equal to a spacing between joists so that when the bands are secured to a top side of the at least three joists, the side members of each truss member abut sides of two joists to hold the at least three joists in a vertical orientation at a specified distance between the at least three joists,

wherein the vertical side members of the truss are provided with apertures for placement of mechanical connectors to secure the side members of the truss to a side of a joist.

Claim 14 (original) The stiffening system of claim 2 wherein the vertical side members of the truss are provided with apertures for placement of mechanical connectors to secure the side members of the truss to a side of a joist.

Claim 15 (original) The stiffening system of claim 3 wherein the vertical side members of the truss are provided with apertures for placement of mechanical connectors to secure the side members of the truss to a side of a joist.

Claims 16-20 (canceled).

Claim 21 (previously presented) The stiffening system of claim 9 wherein central portions of the x-shaped braces can be removed to allow for an unobstructed passageway for duct work to extend between two of the at least three joists.

Claim 22 (previously presented) The stiffening system of claim 10 wherein central portions of the x-shaped braces can be removed to allow for an unobstructed passageway for duct work to extend between two of the at least three joists.

Claim 23 (previously presented) The stiffening system of claim 11 wherein central portions of the x-shaped braces can be removed to allow for an unobstructed passageway for duct work to extend between two of the at least three joists.

Claim 24 (previously presented) The stiffening system of claim 21 wherein the central portions of the x-shaped braces have fracture zones to allow for knocking out the center of the x-shaped braces to provide the unobstructed passageway.

Claim 25 (previously presented) The stiffening system of claim 22 wherein the central portions of the x-shaped braces have fracture zones to allow for knocking out the center of the x-shaped braces to provide the unobstructed passageway.

Claim 26 (previously presented) The stiffening system of claim 23 wherein the central portions of the x-shaped braces have fracture zones to allow for knocking out the center of the x-shaped braces to provide the unobstructed passageway.

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